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Modalities for Incorporating the Cairo Programme of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment into on going national Environment Programme

INTRODUCTION

1. The general objectives of the Cairo Programme on Environmental Co-operation in Africa is 1/ "to strengthen co-operation between African Governments in economic, technical and scientific activities, with the prime objective of halting and reversing the degradation of the African environment in order to satisfy the food and energy needs of the peoples of the continent".

2. To achieve the above objective, it established a Bureau, which was to be responsible for the implementation of decisions of AMCEN; a permanent secretariat of the Conference was also established with the following tasks:

(a) to assist the president of the Conference and its permanent Bureau in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference;

(b) to assist, under the direction of the president, in the organization and maintenance of permanent co-operation among the four committees, among the various networks, and between the networks and the committees.

3. An Inter-Agency Working Group was also established. The tasks of this Group are to co-ordinate the activities of international agencies among themselves, in relation to the implementation of the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation to assist in relating the individual programme of international agencies to the African programme and to serve as a scientific and technical advisory body to the bureau of the Conference through the permanent secretariat.

4. Four Committees were also established. These Committees were established on areas of priority as identified by the Cairo Programme. The focur Committees are:

(1) Desert and Arid Lands Committee;

(2) Forests and Woodlands Committee

(3) Seas Committee; and

(4) River and Lake Basins.

1/ First African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, Cairo, 16-18 December 1985. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Regional Technical Co-operation Networks

5. The tasks of the networks or terms of reference are: (a) strengthening horizontal co-operation between national technical departments and scientific institutions in highly scientific and technical areas: this pooling the experience acquired and ensuring the utilization of available national skills, capabilities and experiences on a 'regional basis': (b) seeking solutions to environmental problems that transland state boundaries; (c) collecting, processing, storing and disseminating basic data provided by national technical department. It is proposed that for these networks to be functional at the national level, a country should designate an institution to serve as the focal point for each of the proposed eight networks:

(a) Environmental management

6. This network is to bring together existing national technical departments, subregional institutions particularly remote sensing centres and regional institutions to form a regional environmental monitoring system.

(b) Climatology

7. The climatology network would be closely connected with the activities to be carried out in pursuance of ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 528(XIX) adopted in May 1984, as well as on-going WMO activities in the region, especially the newly established African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD).

(c) Soil studies including fertilizers

8. The activities of network would promote the establishment of links between soil studies departments and centres in Africa and its functions would include addressing the issues involved in the production of cheap soil amelioration measures and fertilizers.

(d) Water resources

9. The network on water resources is supposed to address both quantitative and qualitative aspects of water, in particular issues relating to monitoring of the quality of surface and underground water.

(e) Renewable sources of energy

10. Drawing on national, subregional and regional machineries, this network would promote the speedy development of practical projects, the dissemination of technical information and the training of personnel.

(f) Conservation of genetic resources

11. This network would cover natural resources and protected areas, germplasm banks in Africa and promote the dissemination of related information.

(g) Science and technology

12. The network would forge links between national institution working in the field of science and technology and research and development.

(h) Environmental education and training

13. The activities of this network would include the promotion of environmental education in schools and institutes of higher education as well as focus on training farmers and stock breeders in proven techniques. The activities of these networks would be integrated by participating agencies into their relevant network activities as the case may be.

14. Added to these networks were regional pilot projects which would be aimed at utilizing "all available African skills and experience to seek economically feasible, environmentally sound and socially acceptable solutions to the complex problems of grassroot development in 150 villages and 50 semi-arid stock raising zones".

Progress Report on the activities of AMCEN since the fourth meeting of the ECA Joint Inter-governmental Committee on Human Settlements and Environment

The Bureau

15. Since the establishment of the Bureau, it has held three meetings: the first meeting of the Bureau was held in Nairobi, Kenya (7-9 October 1986). At the Bureau first meeting the main item discussed was on the decisions and recommendations on the establishment of the regional technical co-operation networks on environment and eco-development in Africa made by AMCEN. At this first meeting the function of the networks, the field of expertise to be covered by their members and criteria for the choice of their location as well as the institutional arrangements considered necessary for their effective operations were considered.

The second meeting of the Bureau

16. The second meeting of the Bureau was held in Cairo, Egypt from 31 March to 2 April 1987. The report of the first meeting of the Bureau was considered including report from the various committees such as: Committee on Deserts and Arid Lands; Committee on River and Lake Basins; Committee on Forests and Woodlands. Also the budgets for each Committee was developed and approved for the 1987-89 budgetary period.

The third meeting of the Bureau - Nairobi, Kenya (22-23 March 1988)

17. At the third meeting, issues and problems of organizational and institutional matters were discussed. At this meeting, it was decided that the Third Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment would be held in May 1989 prior to the meeting of UNEP's Governing Council.

Inter-agency meetings

18. Since the establishment of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, the inter-agency arrangement established by the conference has met three times. Regarding the Regional Technical Co-operation networks on environment and development, a considerable effort has been made by the secretariat since AMCEN II to get the networks fully operational. In all these efforts, the relevant UN agencies/organizations associated with the work of the Inter agency Working Group have been involved to a considerable extent, with encouraging results.

19. With respect to the decisions of AMCEN II regarding those networks to be given priority attention, the following action has been taken:

(a) Environmental monitoring

The Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) of UNEP has undertaken preliminary studies and assessments covering eight countries for the purpose of making the network operational and identifying a suitable African national institution to host it eventually.

(b) Climatology

UNEP is currently participating in inter-agency consultations for the finalization of operational arrangements for the African Centre for Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), which in accordance with the Bureau's decisions, is to perform the task of Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) for the network. In the meantime, the relevant Unit in UNEP has identified some of the activities to be undertaken in the intervening period to assist the work of the RCU. The initial phase will concentrate on data rescue in 42 countries (other than the eight CILSS countries covered by a WMO/Belgium Data Bank Programme). Ten countries will also be selected for counterpart training and installation of equipment. An International Data Rescue Co-ordinating Centre will be identified to undertake training activities, microfilm data processing and related activities.

Soils and Fertilizers

20. The network held its first meeting in Ghana on 19-21 October 1987 and finalized financial, organizational and operational arrangements for its activities. The membership of its management and planning group was also agreed upon for approval by the Bureau. Proposals have also been received from the Director of the Regional Co-ordination Unit for the strengthening of the Unit. The FAO regional office in Accra co-sponsored the meeting and is lending its active support to these efforts.

21. The International Board for Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM), the International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC) and the African Soil Science Society (AFSOS) participated in the meeting and offerred to provide all possible support.

Energy

22. The Energy Network held its first meeting in Senegal from 8-10 February 1988 and decided on its organizational, operational and financial arrangements. A workplan also has been agreed upon. UNESCO and UNDP are lending to the effort.

Water

23. The first meeting of the network took place in Egypt on 26-28 October 1987 and was officially opened by the President of AMCEN. The meeting decided on its organizational, operational and financial arrangements as well as the workplan for 1988-89.

24. The membership of the Management and Planning Group has been agreed upon for approval by the Bureau. UNESCO co-sponsored the meeting and is lending its active support to the network. The ECA, UNIC, WHO and DTCDC (UN Headquarters, New York), which attended the meeting, indicated their willingness to provide support in specific areas. The Egyptian Government has expressed its intention to provide the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) with generous infrastructural support.

25. With respect to the remaining three networks (genetic resources, science and technology and environmental education and training), work is currently underway in the secretariat to establish the network on education and training, which the Second Session of AMCEN decided should be given top priority, and a project is being funded by UNEP for the purpose. The other two are still pending on decision by the Conference.

26. Relating to the Operational arrangements for the four committees of the Conference the report states that the general terms of reference of the Committees as approved by the Bureau and endorsed by AMCEN II now reads as follows:

> To facilitate and co-ordinate the exchange of information between the various specialized regional networks established by the Conference:

To monitor progress in the implementation of the pilot village and pasture areas projects decided upon by the Conference, to provide advice to the managers of these national projects and refer them to the relevant networks, and to submit recommendations regarding the implementation and financing of the projects to the Bureau;

To review, in their areas of competence, results of monitoring of changes in the environment of the continent, especially its natural resources, and to make recommendations to the Bureau for actions needed to protect or properly manage those resources;

To prepare draft reports on the implementation of the pilot regional and the priority sub-regional projects decided upon by the Conference for review by the Bureau before presentation to the Conference.

27. In response to the session's request to the Bureau to finalize the composition, detailed terms of reference, workplans of the committees and the priority sub-regional activities recommended by the Bureau for early attention, the Executive Director's report stated that the following actions have been taken:

(a) Composition of the Committees

28. Governments have been invited to make further nominations of experts to serve on the Committees. So far five countries have responded. The names submitted have been incorporated in the roster of experts whose services can be utilized by the Committees, and the final composition of experts to be selected will be decided by the respective committees at their next meeting.

(b) Detailed terms of reference

29. So far no proposals have been received from Governments or the Committees for additions on amendments to the existing terms of reference.

(c) Workplans of the Committees

30. These will be finalized in the light of progress made by the respective committees with the currently agreed workplans.

(d) Priority sub-regional activities

31. As an initial step for the finalization of these activities, the secretariat is compiling an inventory of on-going sub-regional activities and institutions relating to the priority sub-regional activities in the Cairo Programme.

32. This information will be presented to the relevant committees at their next meeting to enable them finalize their activities.

Budget proposals of the Committees

33. In addition to the budgets already approved for the Committees, the secretariat is making efforts to mobilize funds from the international community.

34. In line with the decision regarding the possibility of establishing a committee or other appropriate organ in island ecosystems, the Governments of the African islands concerned have been informed and their reaction is awaited.

Priority sub-regional activities

35. As requested by the second session, possibilities are being explored for obtaining additional funds for the priority sub-regional activities.

Village and stock-raising pilot projects

36. The follow-up action required relating to these projects on the part of Governments has been brought to their attention. So far 32 countries have given concrete indications of the efforts they are making to mobilize scientific, technical and financial resources from local and external sources in support of village and stock-raising pilot projects. A full report will be provided, as requested by the Conference, at its third session, the report stated.

37. According to the Director of UNEP's report to date, 20 countries have, since the session, fulfilled partially or completely the necessary conditions for the village and stock-raising pilot projects to begin in their countries. And the request of the session that the President of the Conference and the Bureau members in co-operation with the Executive Director should continue their efforts to obtain additional funding for these projects is receiving due attention. Consultations have been held with donor countries and organizations. A number of UN agencies have also been lending their support in various ways.

Inter-agency Working Group

38. Regarding the request of the session for the secretariat to maintain the necessary contacts with the agencies/organizations, the secretariat has been in very close touch with these agencies/organizations in various ways, as has already been indicated, including the operations of the Regional Co-ordination Units (RCUs).

Financial arrangements

39. According to the report, consequent upon the appeal to Governments by the session, the secretariat has sent out further reminders to those Governments that have not already done so regarding the need to fulfill their financial obligations under the Cairo Programme. Similar reminders have been sent concerning the ear-marking of IPF contributions.

40. So far twenty countries have taken the necessary action, and eighteen of these have made the necessary arrangements with their respective UNDP offices and informed the secretariat.

Environmental Education and Training

41 The report also observed that the decision of the session regarding the implementation by Governments of the Programme of Action on Environmental Education and Training in Africa (jointly sponsored by UNESCO and UNEP) has been brought to the attention of the Governments.

42. In line with the decision of the session, the secretariat requested Governments to provide information on institutions that could serve as a regional centre dealing with environment and natural resource use for consideration by the Bureau at its next meeting. So far no responses other than the preliminary presentation by Egypt have been received.

Recommendations of the session to the UNEP Governing Council at its fourteenth session

43. In response to the request of AMCEN II, the fourteenth session of the Governing Council passed a decision by which:

(i) it welcomed the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation adopted by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its first session, as it is directly relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, adopted by the General Assembly at its thirteenth Special Session;

(ii) requested the Executive Director to provide technical and financial support within available resources to those activities of the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation selected for priority implementation.

44. As a result of the above Governing Council decision, UNEP is providing a budget of approximately $2 million for follow-up activities to be undertaken by the secretariat during the 1988-89 biennium. Some agencies have also provided or promised financial and in-kind support which could amount to approximately another $2 million and some donor countries have also given similar encouraging indications of support. This is all the more reason why Governments should demonstrate their seriousness of intent by honouring their obligations.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

45. The UNEP Executive Director's report identified the following problems relating to the implementation of AMCEN's programmes.

General observations

46. Although the past year, as was hoped, has been marked by some progress in the implementation phase of the Cairo Programme, there have been a number of difficulties.

47. Reference has already been made to the question of the response of Governments in the fulfillment of their financial and other obligations. Other serious problems have arisen in connection with the regional and the village and stock-raising projects.

The Networks

48. In the case of the networks, the establishment of their Regional Co-ordination Units has not in most cases been smooth sailing, partly because of organizational and logistical problems. The difficulties posed by the absence of ready telecommunications and other communications facilities between countries have imposed serious constraints on the organization and convening of meetings of management and planning committees and where meetings have eventually been held, the secretariat has been obliged to cover the travel costs of Government participants, eventhough this responsibility should have been borne by the Governments concerned, in line with the decisions of the Conference.

49. Another difficulty has been the late response of Governments to invitations to nominate participants for meetings. It is possible that there is a need for further clarification of communication channels between the secretariat and Governments, and any guidance from the Bureau in this matter would be helpful.

50. The question of persons eligible to attend meetings needs to be clarified. Network meetings are technical meetings, and accordingly should be attended only by technicians with expert knowledge of the subject. And, as has been decided by the Bureau, the secretariat's arrangements for such meetings will be made on the assumption that each participating member country will be represented by one or more technical experts, as it may decide, and that those participating will do so at the Government's expense.

51. The directors of the RCUs will also need to be encouraged to assume greater responsibility in the organization of activities, including meetings of their networks and RCUs. To this end they should quickly establish capabilities within their institutions for communicating readily with the members of their networks as well as the secretariat and the costs involved should be properly reflected in the budgets they present for support by AMCEN.

52. The Pilot Projects

52. In the case of the Pilot Projects the main problem so far has been the level of actual support and involvement by Governments. It will be recalled that the

Bureau, at its second meeting accepted the recommendation of the Inter-agency Working Group that the implementation of these projects should involve three stages

(i) Identification of villages and stock-raising zones, a responsibility which falls primarily on Governments;

(ii) Design of the projects, which involve technical assistance;

(iii) Implementation of the projects, which involve funding and management.

53. While the first stage does not appear to have posed any particularly serious problem (so far 32 countries have selected the necessary sites), serious difficulties seem to have been encountered with regard to the second stage, especially the design aspect, which is properly the responsibility of Governments, which are expected to identify and involve their own experts and more specifically the communities concerned. The result has been that in many cases the secretariat has been obliged to provide consultancies for this purpose at its own expense and in a number of cases has had to repeat requests for proper involvement of the people concerned. The Bureau may wish to recall that the hallmark of the Cairo Plan is to depart from traditional rural development projects and concentrate on projects which heavily involve the communities concerned in their design and implementation, using local experience and expertise.

54. Scondly, there has not been sufficiently close and constant interaction concerning the pilot projects generally between the focal points and the secretariat.

55. Such interaction is necessary to enable the secretariat to monitor progress in this area and be able to mobilize any additional inputs that may be needed for the successful implementation of these projects.

56. This was among the considerations that led the second session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN II), in its resolution 2/1 B5, to request each African Government to designate a national focal point to be responsible for matters relating to the Cairo Programme. Such close interaction with the secretariat will become especially vital when the pilot projects are fully launched on the ground and the support of the various technical organs established by the Conference is required.

The Committees

57. So far all the committees have held their first meetings, which have been quite successful and useful. However, the question of their membership, having regard to the recommendations made by the Inter-agency Working Group and adopted

by the Bureau at its second meeting, needs now to be finalized as early as possible. These recommendations require that:

(a) The membership should be kept as small as possible and that the committees should be composed primarily of experts in the relevant subject areas, in accordance with Conference resolution 1/1, section IB, paragraph 7.

(b) The invitation of the relevant United Nations agencies/organizations to meetings of the committees should be assured by the secretariat.

(c) Attention should be given to ensuring co-ordination and complimentarity between the committees and relevant existing bodies.

58. Also, as recommended by the Inter-agency Working Group, there will be a need for close co-ordination and complementarity between the committees and relevant existing bodies. In this connection, the secretariat is preparing a comprehensive inventory of on-going activities by such bodies for use by the committees.

59. Another point to be borne in mind in the composition and operation of the committees is the importance of continuity. Where the chairmen, who are ministers, are for any reason, unable to carry out any of their normal functions personally, it should be possible for their vice-chairmen to provide the necessary support. For this reason, very close contact should be maintained between the chairmen and vice-chairmen, who will normally be eminent experts.

60. As regards the organization of meetings, many of the problems faced by the committees are similar to those already referred to in the case of the networks and the remedies indicated in the latter case apply, "mutatis mutandis", to the committees.

The Bureau

61. The Bureau has certainly functioned well, a fact which presumably has led to the second session of the Conference to ask the present Bureau to remain in office until the third session. However, there are still possibilities for further strengthening the links between the Bureau and member States of the Conference. The secretariat is making provision to facilitate such contacts.

62. When the composition of the Bureau was initially determined, due account was taken of equitable geographical distribution within the region on the understanding that this would enable the members of the Bureau to maintain relatively

easy contact with their counterpart ministers within their respective subregions for the purpose of implementing the Cairo Programme.

63. This idea has, in fact, been put to practical use on more than one occasion in the past. It is considered that its more regular use could help to ease the existing communications barriers in the region and enable the objectives of the Cairo Programme to be kept more strongly alive in the countries of the five subregions.